

The Supply of the Spirit



David Wilkerson June 24, 2013

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul opened up his heart and soul to the church. Throughout Chapter 1 the apostle's spirit overflows with joy and peace. He speaks of abundant rejoicing and urges his readers to bring their requests to God with joy, "in nothing terrified by your adversaries" (Philippians 1:28). Meanwhile, Paul himself rejoiced in "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (4:7). And he wrote to the church to do likewise: "My brethren, rejoice in the Lord" (3:1).

When Paul penned these encouraging words, he was shackled in a prison in Rome. He had been locked away for two years and during that time church leaders in Rome turned against him. They were so jealous of Paul they refused to accept his pastoral care. At times these leaders ignored Paul. At other times they circulated vicious gossip about him. They even harassed Paul, stooping to the point of intercepting his mail. According to the apostle, these sinful men "preach(ed) Christ of contention" and with "envy and strife" (1:16, 15).

Yet through all of these trials, Paul maintained a joyful and forgiving spirit. He was saying to the congregation at Philippi, "Some of these men are so envious of me they are distorting the gospel they preach. They preach contention and division. Even so, Christ is still being preached. And in that I rejoice and will keep on rejoicing." "Every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (1:18).

Here was a man bearing the care of many churches on his shoulders. Yet Paul was ignored, misunderstood and rejected by friends and enemies alike. And he had to take it all while chained up in a tiny, dank prison cell. It must have broken Paul's heart to hear those reports of churches he had labored over now sitting under a distorted gospel. At the same time, other churches were enjoying God's abundant blessings in the Spirit — yet after all his work in ministry, Paul couldn't be there to enjoy the blessings with them. Despite this, Paul's heart overflowed with a quiet, steady joy. What was his secret? What was the source of his strength?

Paul speaks about the "supply of the Spirit." "I know that this shall turn to my salvation [deliverance] through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:19, my italics). The Spirit of Christ that Paul refers to here is the Holy Spirit. He's saying, in effect:

"There is a difference between the filling of the Spirit and a flowing of the Spirit. Right now, in spite of all my personal trials, the Holy Spirit is flowing through me. I know that all these humiliations and rejections, all the pain and suffering, will do me no harm. Rather, the Lord is using it all to work out a glorious plan for my deliverance."

Paul then offered his thanks to the faithful Christians in Philippi for praying for him. He said, in essence, "Your prayers for me are working. God is supplying me with more and more of the Holy Spirit. In my trials I have discovered that the greater my need, the more of the Holy Spirit I receive. And right now the flow of the Holy Spirit in me is increasing. The river of the Spirit is getting wider and deeper, and I'm being carried away in the flow of his peace and joy!"

The word Paul uses for "supply" in this epistle means "to meet the situation." The root word here is "fully supplied." This signifies full provision for every circumstance. Such "full supply" comes only by faith. Paul said to

the Galatians, “How did you receive the Spirit? By the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?...He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Galatians 3:2, 5).

In my experience of decades in ministry, I have come to believe that God supplies the Spirit through “desperate importunity of faith.” Paul is our example in this. Picture the apostle in his situation in Rome — sitting chained in prison, suffering cold and wet while poorly clothed. Yet here was Paul’s prayer: “More, more, much more, O God — give me a supply of your Spirit! Give me all of the Holy Ghost I need to keep me joyful and at rest in this trial. Your ever-increasing supply of the Spirit will sustain me. That supply will give me everything I need to get through.”

I do not say the following lightly, knowing that saints are suffering terrible oppression all over the world. Yet it is my belief that the people of God can bear anything — indeed, everything — if we have a supply of the Spirit flowing to us from his throne. He causes a river to flow from our innermost being that is greater and more powerful than any trial.

Someone who is “full of the Holy Ghost and power” is distinguished by how much the Spirit is in charge of his life.

There is no other power available to us to live in Christ but the power of the Holy Spirit. Picture the Holy Spirit as a boundless ocean — a vast body of living water beyond all measurement, an endless supply. This supply is available to all who walk with Christ. How can we tap into it?

Any increase in supply depends on an increase of faith. Therefore, we get more of the Holy Spirit by giving up more and more control of our lives. Fullness of him comes by fully surrendering ourselves in faith. The more we yield control of our lives to the Spirit, the more we’ll hear the Lord whisper to our soul: “Now you are coming into power. True power is unwavering trust in my Spirit. Yes, real power is at work in you now.”

As we yield to the power of the Holy Spirit, the word he brings will be clear and assuring. Consider how clear the word was that Peter received from the Holy Spirit: “Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and go thee down, and get with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them” (Acts 10:19-20).

Knowing this was the voice of the Spirit speaking, Peter obeyed, going with the men to the house of Cornelius. During that two-day journey, however, Peter must have had to fight off doubts. “What are you doing, Peter? Under the law, Jews are not permitted to fellowship with Gentiles. What if they insist you eat with them? That is forbidden for you.” But there was a power at work in Peter, assuring him, “Go, doubting nothing.”

We all know there was a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Cornelius’s house. Suddenly, Gentiles rejoiced at receiving the gifts of salvation in Christ and the powerful filling of the Holy Spirit. Yet, when Peter reported what happened to the church in Jerusalem, the leaders there were upset, just as predicted. The circumcision group confronted Peter, saying, “You ate with Gentiles? You fellowshiped with men who are uncircumcised?” (see Acts 11:3).

Peter answered, “I said, Not so, Lord...But the voice answered me again from heaven...And the Spirit bade me go...As I began to speak [to the Gentiles in Caesarea], the Holy Ghost fell on them...What was I, that I could withstand God?” (11:8-9, 12, 15, 17). In short, Peter explained, “The Lord clearly wanted to reach these Gentiles. Who was I to stand in his way?”

I believe the Lord is looking for servants like Peter today, those who will say, “I sought the Lord and surrendered my will to his Spirit. I am assured his voice is directing me.”

What about a full supply of the Holy Spirit in our hard times and afflictions?

How does the Holy Spirit work in us during difficult times? His power is released as we receive him as our burden bearer. Again and again, we’re told in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit’s abode is not in heaven but in our inner man. He is near, and he waits patiently for us to give him control of every situation, trial and affliction.

John says the Holy Spirit who abides in me is greater than all the powers that be (1 John 4:4). And Peter says to cast all my cares and burdens on the Spirit (see 1 Peter 5:7). This is all part of our witness to the world — as one who has cast his every burden on the Lord.

Consider Paul's witness in this regard. He told the Corinthians, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9). Paul was saying, in effect, "When we considered everything, our response was one of death." In short, as Paul looked at his dire situation, all he could see were afflictions, troubles, hunger, persecution, imprisonment, attempts on his life. "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life" (1:8). In short, Paul said, "The only way out of this trial, in human terms, is to die and be with Jesus."

What did Paul do at that point? Did he resign himself, saying, "There is no way out"? No. The Holy Spirit revealed to Paul God's purpose behind it. It was meant to force Paul never to trust in himself, but to fully trust the Holy Spirit to deliver him.

Scripture tells us in so many passages, "Having done all, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." I believe this means the following: "Having exhausted all human efforts — having tried every way to solve your own problems and having come to the end of it all — let God accomplish it in you by his Spirit."

Paul says this requires more than a normal "trust" in God. It calls for a greater trust, one that relies on the "God which raiseth the dead" (1:9). The message here is powerful: "He is able to deliver us even from this helpless, death-like situation."

Paul trusted the power of the Holy Spirit — and God delivered! "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us" (2 Corinthians 1:10). Paul is both giving a testimony and speaking in faith about the future. He's saying, "The Spirit has delivered me out of a hopeless situation. He is delivering me even now. And he will continue to deliver me in any affliction I face."

Dear reader, I believe there are manifestations of the Holy Spirit. But the evidence of the Spirit is not in some emotional manifestation. His power is revealed in our lives when we receive him through a quiet, ever-growing knowledge. When we yield to him, we are given ever-growing light about his care, his burden-bearing, his delivering power on our behalf. If I fully trust in him, I will commit myself to give him the reigns of my life — all of it. And that surrender will become a testimony to the world that our God cares — and he supplies grace, strength and deliverance to those who love him.

"Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). The Holy Spirit is not fully received until he is fully in charge. Give him the reigns of your life today.

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